

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Bog turtles and poaching

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

I've often talked about southern Appalachian Mountain bogs, their rarity, and the rareness of many of the plants and animals found in them. There's a bog south of Asheville that's a bittersweet place. Despite development in its vicinity, it still hangs on, and in fact people in the community recognize its importance. What makes it a sad place is it used to be home to one of the best bog turtle populations in the southeast. Until those turtles were poached to feed an illegal pet trade.

Bog turtles are protected by the Endangered Species Act, which makes it illegal to sell them or collect and possess them without a permit – which are typically only given for research or conservation efforts. Unfortunately, not everyone respects the law, or appreciates the level of imperilment faced by bog turtles in the wild.

If you decide to have an exotic animal as a pet, first of all check your state wildlife agency to see if the animal you're considering is legally protected and if any special rules for possessing one apply. Beyond that, do as much as possible to ensure that you're buying captive-bred animals, and not animals that were caught in the wild.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.